

Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

May 14, 2019

By Carol Hotton

Location: Hydrangea Room, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Tina Murray, Chair; Carol Hotton, Secretary; John Barnwell, Nancy Cohen, Bruce Levine, Commissioners; Sharon Cohen, Committee on the Environment liaison with Tree Commission.

Absent: Jan van Zutphen, Urban Forest Manager

Meeting convened at 6:50 pm.

1. **Minutes** for March approved. Minutes for April approved with slight modification.
2. **Report from Sharon Cohen on Committee on the Environment activities**
 - A. City has hired Cadmus Group to create a new sustainability plan, which will be presented on June 3 at 7:15 pm in the Hydrangea Room.
 - B. Committee on Environment focusing on reducing emissions
 - C. COE has several new members who will focus on reducing private and commercial waste.
 - D. Pilot tree inventory project on Sharon's block complete. In addition to inventory, project includes condition of tree. Sharon is confident she can complete Ward 3 but asked for help with other wards. Goal is to complete this by September. In addition to generating a tree inventory, this project is intended to encourage residents to engage with trees.
 - E. Next goal for COE: ban single use plastics.
3. **Urban Forest Manager Report** (by Tina)
 - A. 75 trees planted for City spring planting, which is still in process. Requirement to put this out for competitive bidding slowed process.
 - B. Permit volume rising.
 - C. UFM's request for 1 year intern was cut from budget. This will impact tree canopy goal, forest inventory and analysis.
 - D. Council member Cindy Dyballa has discussed working with Conservation Montgomery to schedule tree care workshop.
4. **Miscellaneous**

Discussion of scheduling tree walks. Although very desirable to include urban forest manager, it has been done in years past in his absence.

Tree Commission memo on Takoma Junction redevelopment was sent to City Council.
5. **Continued discussion of Tree Ordinance Revision**
 - A. Discussion of simplification of tree replacement formula, presented by John.

- a. Checked formulas in other tree ordinances; tended to be much simpler, e.g., Leesburg requires a 1 to 1 replacement for tree removals.
 - b. Current criteria for evaluating tree condition are subjective and difficult to evaluate, e.g. twig elongation. UFM does not put much weight on this criterion. Pest and disease infection also difficult to evaluate. John suggested replacing pest infection criterion with how diseases affect current viability.
 - c. Replace twig elongation criterion with condition of roots, e.g. evidence of heaving or decay at base.
 - d. Include criterion of site condition, e.g. too close to house, leaning over house, roots constrained by pavement. This could be assigned semi-quantitative values: optimal, suboptimal, poor.
 - e. Simplify formula by avoiding canopy replacement entirely. Instead, replace 1 tree removed with 3 similar trees (for example). No replacement fee required for invasive removal, but they must be replaced with desirable trees.
 - f. Formulate could be reduced to 3 criteria: desirability, health and site conditions.
 - g. Remove life expectancy – another subjective criterion.
- B. Discussion of how to present our recommendations to City Council—as marked up document or set of recommendations? Perhaps both?
- C. Changing fee for permit application for waivers and removals to the same. The current Ordinance requires that homeowner know before whether the tree will warrant a waiver.
- D. Recommendations for Tree Ordinance revision to be presented to City Council on July 10 or 15.

Action Item: Tina will follow up with Cindy Dyballa on Conservation Montgomery tree care workshop.